



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**A STUDY ON UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK (UNIMAS)  
COGNITIVE SCIENCE GRADUATES**

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(Cognitive Science)  
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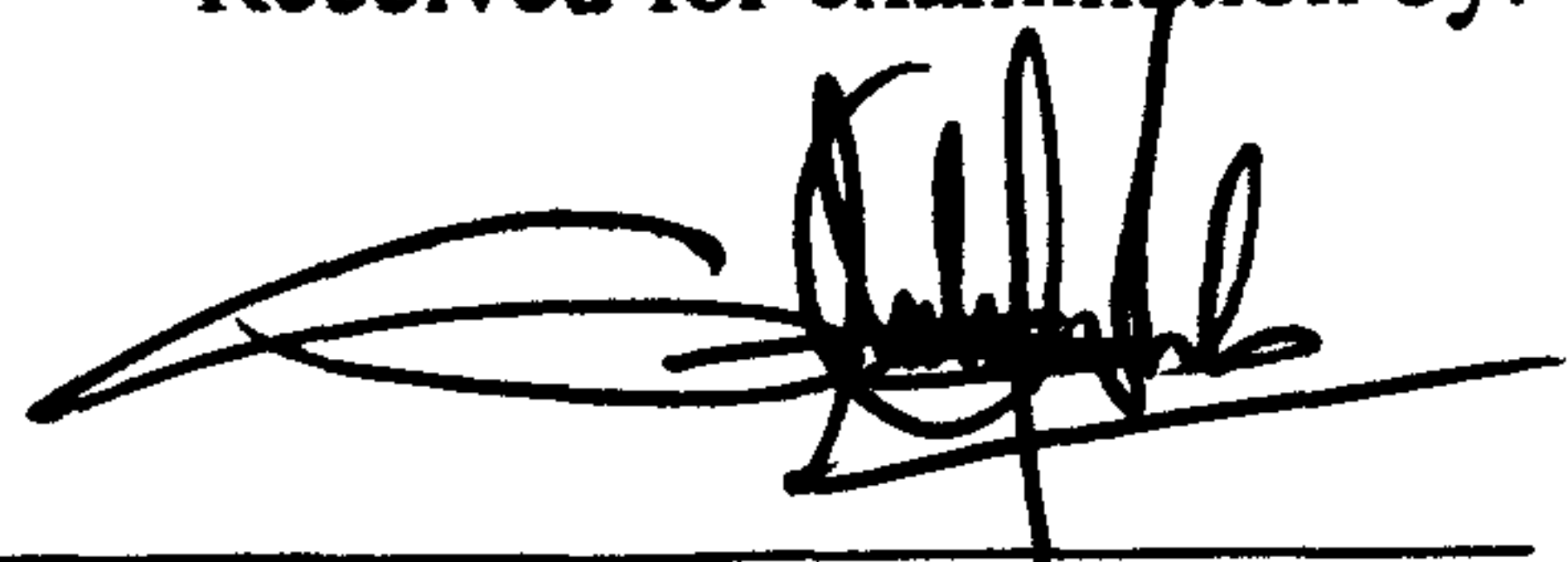
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Abstrak</b>	<b>xi</b>

### CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Background of Study	2
1.2	Statement of Problem	2
1.3	Research Objectives	3
1.4	Conceptual Framework	4
1.5	Research Questions	4
1.6	Definition of Terms	5
1.6.1	Conceptual Definition	5
1.6.1.1	Cognitive Science	5
1.6.1.2	Employability	5
1.6.1.3	Cognitive Science Graduates	5
1.6.1.4	Cognitive Science Undergraduates	5
1.6.1.5	Cognitive Science Students	6
1.6.2	Operational Definition	6
1.6.2.1	Cognitive Science	6
1.6.2.2	Employability	6
1.6.2.3	Cognitive Science Graduates	6
1.6.2.4	Cognitive Science Undergraduates	6
1.6.2.5	Cognitive Science Students	7
1.7	Significance of the Study	7
1.8	Limitation of the Study	8

### CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0	Introduction	9
2.1	Cognitive Science	9
2.2	The Graduate Identity Approach	10
2.3	Cognitive Science Graduates's Employability	12
2.4	What Needed to be Improved to Enhance Graduates' Employability	13
2.5	Challenges Faced by Graduates	15
2.6	Job Opportunities for Cognitive Science Graduates	16
2.7	Applicable Skills and Knowledge Learned by Cognitive Science Graduates	19
2.8	Conclusion	20



## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.0	Introduction	21
3.1	Research Design	21
3.2	Population	22
3.3	Research Instrument	22
3.4	Analysis Framework	24
3.5	Measuring the Relationship between the Cognitive Science Graduates' Employability and their Demographic Characteristics	26
3.6	Conclusion	26

## **CHAPTER 4 FINDING**

4.0	Introduction	27
4.1	Respondents' Demographic Characteristics	27
4.1.1	Gender	28
4.1.2	Race	28
4.1.3	Place of Origin	29
4.1.4	Year of Graduation	30
4.1.5	Academic Performance	31
4.2	The Respondents' Employability	31
4.2.1	Type of Work	31
4.2.2	Current Employer	32
4.2.3	Work Status	32
4.3	Relationship between the Respondents' Demographic Characteristics and their Employability	33
4.3.1	Relationship between the Type of Work and the Gender	33
4.3.2	Relationship between the Type of Work and the Place of Origin	33
4.3.3	Relationship between the Respondents' Type of Work and their Races	34
4.3.4	Relationship between the Respondents' Type of Work and their Year of Graduation	35
4.3.5	Relationship between the Respondents' Type of Work and their Academic Performance in University	35
4.3.6	Relationship between the Respondents' Current Employer and the Respondents' Gender	36
4.3.7	Relationship between the Respondents' Current Employer and the Respondents' Place of Origin	36
4.3.8	Relationship between the Respondents' Current Employer and the Respondents' Races	37
4.3.9	Relationship between the Respondents' Current Employer and the Respondents' Year of Graduation	38



4.3.10	Relationship between the Respondents' Current Employer and the Respondents' Academic Performance in University	39
4.3.11	Relationship between the Respondents' Work Status and their Gender	39
4.3.12	Relationship between the Respondents' Work Status and their Race	40
4.3.13	Relationship between the Respondents' Work Status and their Year of Graduation	40
4.3.14	Relationship between the Respondent's Work Status and their Academic Performance in University	42
4.3.15	Summary of the Relationship between the Respondents' Demographic Characteristics and Their Employability	43
4.4	Suggestions from the Respondents to Improve the Cognitive Science Students' Employability	44
4.5	Challenges Faced by Cognitive Science Graduates	44
4.5.1	Challenges Faced by Respondents while Looking for Jobs	45
4.5.2	Challenges Faced by Respondents when Working the Job	46
4.6	Fields that are competing with Cognitive Science in term of Job Relatedness	48
4.7	Jobs that have been done by the Respondents	49
4.8	The Respondents' Satisfaction Level of the Cognitive Science Programme that they have attended	50
4.9	The Knowledge and Skills Learned from Cognitive Science Programme that are Applicable in Job	51
4.9.1	The Courses in Cognitive Science programme which are Useful in Current Job	51
4.9.2	The Courses in Cognitive Science programme which are Useful in Respondents' Opinions	53
4.9.3	The Courses in Cognitive Science programme which are not Useful in Respondents' Opinions	54
4.10	Conclusion	55

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.0	Introduction	56
5.1	Summary of the study	56
5.2	Summary of the Findings	57
5.3	Recommendations	60
5.3.1	Recommendations for Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FCSHD)	60
5.3.2	Recommendations for the (Under)graduates	61
5.3.3	Recommendations for the Future Researchers	61



5.4	Conclusion	62
	References	63
	Appendix A	65
	Appendix B	70
	Appendix C	75
	Appendix D	78



## **LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>Figure 2.1</b> The Graduate Identity Approach	10
<b>Figure 2.2</b> The model of Generic Competencies Required by the Malaysian Graduates	15
<b>Figure 4.1</b> Scatter Plot Diagram of the Respondents' Type of Work and Race	34
<b>Figure 4.2</b> Scatter Plot Diagram of the Respondents' Current Employer and Race	37
<b>Figure 4.3</b> Scatter Plot Diagram of the Respondents' Work Status and their Year of Graduation	41
<b>Figure 4.4</b> Scatter Plot Diagram of the Respondents' Work Status and their Academic Performance in University	42



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 3.1</b> Summary of Research Questions Associate with Types of Methodology Used	24
<b>Table 3.2</b> Summary of Questionnaire Associates with Research Questions	25
<b>Table 4.1</b> Division of Respondents by Gender	28
<b>Table 4.2</b> Division of Respondents by Race	28
<b>Table 4.3</b> Division of Respondents by Place of Origin	29
<b>Table 4.4</b> Division of Respondents by Year of Graduation	30
<b>Table 4.5</b> Divison of Respondents by Academic Performance	31
<b>Table 4.7</b> Division of Respondents by Type of Work	31
<b>Table 4.8</b> Division of Respondents by Current Employer	32
<b>Table 4.9</b> Division of Respondents by Work Status	32
<b>Table 4.10</b> Chi-Square Tests (Type of Work and Gender)	33
<b>Table 4.11</b> Chi-Square Tests (Type of Work and Place of Origin)	33
<b>Table 4.12</b> Chi-Square Tests (Type of Work and Race)	34
<b>Table 4.13</b> Chi-Square Tests (Type of Work and Year of Graduation)	35



<b>Table 4.14</b> Chi-Square Tests (Type of Work and Academic Performance in University)	36
<b>Table 4.15</b> Chi-Square Tests (Current Employer and Gender)	36
<b>Table 4.16</b> Chi-Square Tests (Current Employer and Place of Origin)	36
<b>Table 4.17</b> Chi-Square Tests (Current Employer and Race)	37
<b>Table 4.18</b> Chi-Square Tests (Current Employer and Year of Graduation)	38
<b>Table 4.19</b> Chi-Square Tests (Current Employer and Academic Performance)	39
<b>Table 4.20</b> Chi-Square Tests (Work Status and Gender)	39
<b>Table 4.21</b> Chi-Square Tests (Work Status and Race)	39
<b>Table 4.22</b> Chi-Square Tests (Work Status and Year of Graduation)	40
<b>Table 4.23</b> Chi-Square Tests (Work Status and Academic Performance in University)	42
<b>Table 4.24</b> Summary of the Relationship between the Respondents' Demographic Characteristics and their Employability	43
<b>Table 4.25</b> Suggestions from the Respondents to Improve the Cognitive Science Students' Employability	44
<b>Table 4.26</b> Challenges Faced by Respondents while Looking for Jobs	45
<b>Table 4.27</b> Challenges Faced by Respondents when Working the Job	46



**Table 4.28**  
Fields that are competing with Cognitive Science in term of Job  
Relatedness 48

**Table 4.29**  
The Respondents' Satisfaction Level of the Cognitive Science  
Programme that they have attended 50

**Table 4.30**  
The Courses that are Useful in Respondents' Current Job 51

**Table 4.31**  
The Courses in Cognitive Science programme which are Useful in  
Respondents' Opinions 53

**Table 4.32**  
The Courses in Cognitive Science programme which are not Useful in  
Respondents' Opinions 54



## **ABSTRACT**

### **A STUDY ON THE UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK (UNIMAS) COGNITIVE SCIENCE GRADUATES**

**Tan Kok Chen**

The purpose of this study is to explore the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) Cognitive Science graduates' employability. Survey using questionnaires was implemented as the research instrument to collect the data from seventy-one respondents. The findings suggest that majority of the respondents is employed and have difficulty to convince interviewers what Cognitive Science is about and its usefulness when attending job interviews. Majority of the respondents stated that there was nothing much that could be applied in their current jobs from what they have learned from the Cognitive Science programme; majority of the respondents also suggested that improving own skills, knowledge, and self-confidence in order to enhance the Cognitive Science students' employability. Furthermore, majority of the respondents rated that Computer Science and Information Technology related fields as the fields that were competing with Cognitive Science in term of job relatedness. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with the Cognitive Science programme and majority of the respondents claimed that Cognitive Psychology was useful in their current jobs. In addition, majority of the respondents are of opinion that Cognitive Psychology was a useful course and majority of the respondents pointed out that all the courses in Cognitive Science programme are useful. Finally, this study presents a number of recommendations for the Faculty, the UNIMAS (under)graduates, and the future researchers. As a conclusion, the UNIMAS Cognitive Science graduates' employability has been revealed.



## **ABSTRAK**

### **SATU KAJIAN MENGENAI SISWAZAH LEPASAN SAINS KOGNITIF DI UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK (UNIMAS)**

*Tan Kok Chen*

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa kebolehan bekerja siswazah lepasan Sains Kognitif di Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Survei menggunakan soal selidik yang dijadikan sebagai instrumen kajian telah diimplikasikan untuk mengumpul data daripada tujuh puluh satu responden. Dapatan kajian menemui majoriti dari kalangan responden bekerja dan majoriti dari kalangan responden sukar untuk menjelaskan apa itu Sains Kognitif dan kelebihan Sains Kognitif kepada penemu ramah ketika menghadiri temu ramah kerja. Majoriti dari kalangan responden menyatakan tiada apa-apa yang telah dipelajari dalam program Sains Kognitif dapat diaplikasikan dalam pekerjaan semasa; majority dari kalangan responden mencadangkan bahawa kemahiran, pengetahuan, dan keyakinan diri harus dipertingkatkan untuk meningkatkan kebolehan bekerja pelajar-pelajar Sains Kognitif. Tambahan pula, majoriti dari kalangan responden menyatakan bahawa bidang berkaitan dengan Sains Komputer and Informasi Teknologi merupakan bidang yang bersaing dengan Sains Kognitif dari segi pekerjaan yang berkaitan. Majoriti dari kalangan responden berpuas hati dengan program Sains Kognitif yang mereka telah jalani dan majoriti dari kalangan responden menyatakan bahawa Psikologi Kognitif adalah berguna dalam pekerjaan semasa mereka. Selain itu, majoriti dari kalangan responden berpendapat Psikologi Kognitif merupakan satu kursus yang berguna dan majoriti dari kalangan responden berpendapat semua kursus-kursus dalam program Sains Kognitif adalah berguna. Seterusnya, kajian ini mengemukakan beberapa cadangan untuk Fakulti, siswazah-siswazah dan pelajar-pelajar UNIMAS, dan kajian di masa depan. Secara konklusi, kebolehan bekerja siswazah lepasan Sains Kognitif di UNIMAS telah diterokai.*



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Many people further their studies with the hope that they will get to compete with the others when they come out to work in the future. There are thousands of people graduating each year in Malaysia. Some get their jobs as soon as they graduated. Yet, some are still struggling looking for jobs of their preferences. Deputy Youth and Sport Minister, Datuk Liow Tiong Lai said that there were 35% of the local graduates unemployed as they were satisfied doing part-time jobs while waiting for jobs from government or private sector (The Star, 2007). Worst, some accept jobs that they have no interest or major in for the purpose of earning a living. Deputy Minister of Human Resources of Malaysia reported that 70% of the graduates from public universities, 26% of the graduates from private higher learning institutions, and 34% of the graduates from foreign universities are still jobless (Suresh, 2006 as cited in Juhdi, Jauhariah, & Shaharudin, 2007).



## **1.1 Background of the Study**

Cognitive Science programme has been introduced in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) since 1996. Up to date, there are nine batches of Cognitive Science graduates. However, there is no known study that has been done on the Cognitive Science graduates. It is therefore adamant to find out the Cognitive Science graduates' employability for the purpose of strategic development of the programme and to ensure the programme success in producing graduates that meet the needs of the nation.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There is no known study that was done on the Cognitive Science graduates' employability. The UNIMAS Cognitive Science graduates' employability skills of remain unknown. No known study has been done on how well or badly the Cognitive Science graduates have performed in the job market. Also, no known study has been conducted on the Cognitive Science alumni's satisfaction level of the Cognitive Science programme that they have attended.

UNIMAS is the sole local university in Malaysia that offers the real Cognitive Science programme; therefore, there is a tendency that many people do not know what Cognitive Science is about; this may affect the opportunities of the Cognitive Science graduates to compete with the other graduates from similar fields. There are other Cognitive Science programmes in the country; one is at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) and the other is at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). However, the Cognitive Science programme in both universities are part of the universities' Education programme. Due to this, there is a tendency that the self-esteem of the Cognitive Sciences graduates as well as the UNIMAS Cognitive Science undergraduates may be affected indirectly. They may feel that they are the isolated group of students in the country and not knowing what are in store for them in future when they are out in the job market. Perhaps, they are in doubt with their abilities and skills that they learn as Cognitive Science students. Moreover, they may be uncertain of the path they are



taking as Cognitive Science students; they are not certain with the future career of a Cognitive Science graduate. On the other hand, there may be success stories of Cognitive Science graduates that we do not know of. Perhaps, these stories will inspire the undergraduates and give them better confidence.

There is a high possibility that many of the Malaysians think that a bachelor's degree holder is better than a diploma in term of opportunity in the job market. Meaning to say, many people are pursuing bachelor's degree rather than just a diploma with the thought of getting better and more secure job. In fact, a diploma is made specific for certain job market whereas, a bachelor's degree is more toward knowledge and theory rather than training students to fit into certain categories of jobs. If this is the case, Cognitive Science graduates may face challenges in getting a job and competing with graduates who are diploma holders and coming from similar fields. The competition becomes tougher when organizations are looking for specific skills of graduates. As huge organizations are divided into several departments, there is a tendency that multi-skilled employees are not needed. Thus, this becomes the disadvantage for Cognitive Science graduates who secured bachelor's degree instead of diploma which is more specific to the job market.

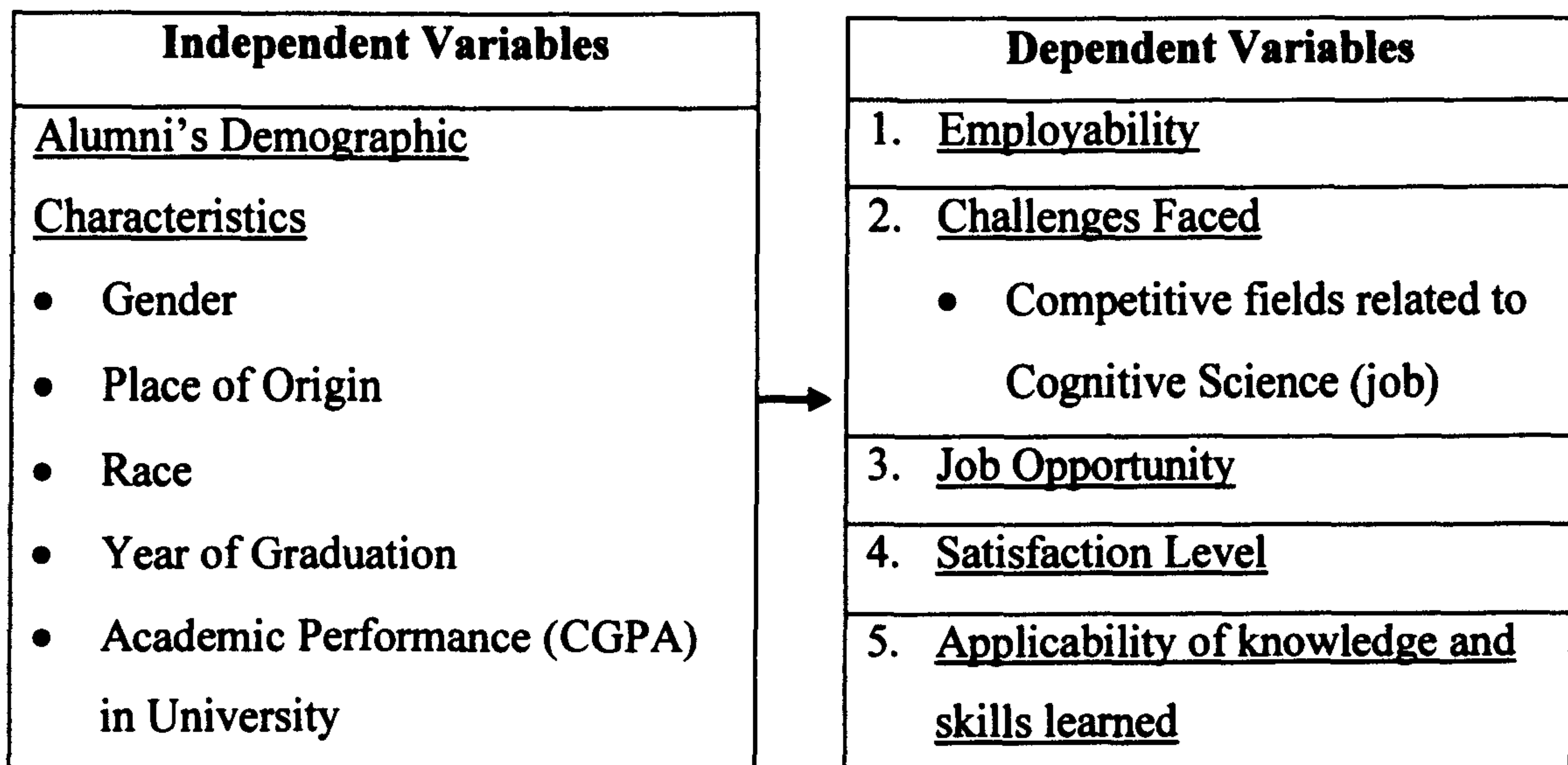
### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To study the Cognitive Science graduates' employability.
  - 1.1 To find out the relationship between the Cognitive Science graduates' employability and their demographic characteristics.
  - 1.2 To identify what need to be improved to ensure Cognitive Science students' employability.
2. To find out the challenges faced by the Cognitive Science graduates.
  - 2.2 To find out the fields competing with Cognitive Science in term of job relatedness that can affect the Cognitive Science graduates' employability.
3. To identify the job opportunities for Cognitive Science graduates.



4. To find out the Cognitive Science graduates' satisfaction level of the Cognitive Science programme that they have attended.
5. To find out the applicability of knowledge and skills learned from the Cognitive Science programme.

#### 1.4 Conceptual Framework



#### 1.5 Research Questions

1. How is the UNIMAS Cognitive Science graduates' employability?
  - 1.1 Is there any relationship between the Cognitive Science graduates' employability and their demographic characteristics?
  - 1.2 How to improve the Cognitive Science students' employability?
2. What are the challenges faced by Cognitive Science graduates?
  - 2.1 What are the fields competing with Cognitive Science in term of job relatedness that can affect the Cognitive Science graduates' employability?
3. What are the job opportunities available for Cognitive Science graduates?
4. What is the level of satisfaction of Cognitive Science graduates on the Cognitive Science programme that they have attended?
5. How applicable are the knowledge and skills learned from Cognitive Science programme?



## **1.6 Definition of Terms**

### **1.6.1 Conceptual Definition**

#### **1.6.1.1 Cognitive Science**

Cognitive Science is the interdisciplinary study of the mind and intelligence. It collaborates with philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, linguistics, and anthropology (Goldstein, 2005).

#### **1.6.1.2 Employability**

Employability is an employment relationship which an individuals perform a variety of job activities rather than hold specific jobs, and are expected to constantly learn skills that will keep them employed (McShane & Von Glinow, 2008).

#### **1.6.1.3 Cognitive Science Graduates**

Cognitive Science graduates are learners who have completed the Bachelor of Cognitive Science in any learning institutions.

#### **1.6.1.4 Cognitive Science Undergraduates**

Cognitive Science undergraduates are learners who are still pursuing the course of Cognitive Science in order to complete the Bachelor of Cognitive Science in any learning institutions.



#### **1.6.1.5 Cognitive Science Students**

Cognitive Science students correspond to the Cognitive Science graduates and Cognitive Science undergraduates.

### **1.6.2 Operational Definition**

#### **1.6.2.1 Cognitive Science**

Cognitive Science is the interdisciplinary study of mind and intelligence. It collaborates with philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, and linguistics.

#### **1.6.2.2 Employability**

Employability comprises of an individual's type of work, current employer, and work status.

#### **1.6.2.3 Cognitive Science Graduates**

Cognitive Science graduates are learners who have completed the Bachelor of Cognitive Science in UNIMAS.

#### **1.6.2.4 Cognitive Science Undergraduates**

Cognitive Science undergraduates are learners who are still pursuing the course of Cognitive Science in order to complete the Bachelor of Cognitive Science in UNIMAS.



#### **1.6.2.5 Cognitive Science Students**

Cognitive Science students correspond to the Cognitive Science graduates and Cognitive Science undergraduates.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study benefits the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FCSHD) in UNIMAS. It traces Cognitive Science graduates' employability and challenges faced in work. It gives feedback to the faculty on the achievements of the Cognitive Science graduates. Indirectly, this study reflects the compatibility of the courses and syllabuses offered for Cognitive Science programme to the need of work place.

Moreover, this study answers the uncertainty of the Cognitive Science undergraduates. With this study as a guideline, Cognitive Science undergraduates can plan for and get a clearer picture of their own future. Ultimately, this may boost their self-esteem as Cognitive Science students.

Furthermore, Cognitive Science graduates may use this study as a guideline to overcome their fears and challenges that they faced. They may get inspirations from the achievements of the other Cognitive Science graduates for self-improvement and motivation. Thus, this may boost their self-esteem and desire to perform better as Cognitive Science graduates.

In short, this study promises benefits to every party – the faculty, graduates, undergraduates and even the public. The faculty gets feedback from the graduates, while the graduates and undergraduates use this study as their guideline. In addition, the public knows more about what Cognitive Science is about.



## **1.8 - Limitation of the Study**

This study is limited to only the UNIMAS Cognitive Science graduates. It focuses on the UNIMAS Cognitive Science graduates as UNIMAS is the only Malaysian university that offers this programme.

This study does not include the whole population of UNIMAS Cognitive Science graduates; some of the graduates are difficult to be tracked. Furthermore, the time given for this study is limited; some graduates are not available when the study is conducted.